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Revisionist ROCOR: A Historian's Analysis of Fr. John Whiteford's Article Concerning St. John of Shanghai & The Moscow Patriarchate

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By Subdeacon Nektarios, M.A.

In a recent article, John Whiteford—the ROCOR-MP priest notorious for his unyielding defense of the Moscow Patriarchate and of the 2007 false union between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate—once again indulges in his characteristic amateur historiography and proof-texting [1]. This time, he seeks to appropriate Saint John of San Francisco as a supposed justification for remaining in communion with the heretical Moscow Patriarchate.



This polemic comes in the wake of my own recent article, *The False Shepherd: Moses McPherson's War Against the True Orthodox Church*, wherein I laid out definitively the historical stance of the Russian Church Abroad toward the Old Calendarist Orthodox Christians. There I demonstrated beyond doubt that ROCOR always recognized the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church—not as schismatic, as the deceitful clergy of the new ROCOR-MP now assert—but as true confessors of Orthodoxy. Saint John, Saint Philaret, Saint Vitaly, Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Jordanville, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), together with a host of other towering hierarchs, consistently affirmed them as faithful and canonical Orthodox Christians.



In his most recent and failed foray into history, Whiteford attempts to enlist Saint John of San Francisco in defense of the Moscow Patriarchate against the Greek Old Calendarists. The reason for this maneuver is transparent: over the past two years, multitudes of faithful have fled the Sergianist-captured ROCOR-MP for the Genuine Orthodox Church of Greece—and not merely laity, but clergy as well.

At the very outset of his article, Whiteford dismissively brands those who rejected the false union with the Soviet-created Moscow Patriarchate as “people in ROCOR who took more extreme views.” What he will not admit is that these supposed extremists, according to this Moscow Patriarchate apologist, were none other than Saint Philaret of New York, Saint Vitaly (Ustinov), Archbishop Averky, Bishop Gregory, and the remnant of ROCOR who refused to betray the legacy of the Catacomb Church and ROCOR by submitting to Moscow.

In a rhetorical sleight of hand, Whiteford appeals to the conservative temperament of Saint John—his monarchism, his steadfast defense of Orthodoxy—as if such personal traits could somehow exonerate the Moscow Patriarchate. He would have the faithful believe that these qualities of the saint should persuade those now awakening to the heretical activity of Moscow, and to the complicit silence of the ROCOR-MP synod, to remain in bondage to them.

When we consider Saint John, we must acknowledge the truth plainly: he was indeed pastoral and more lenient in his approach toward those in the Soviet Moscow Patriarchate, the Metropolia, the Paris Jurisdiction, and World Orthodoxy at large. This is indisputable. Yet the essential question remains: does this in any way vindicate the Moscow Patriarchate from its consistent practice of both Sergianism and the Pan-Heresy of Ecumenism?

Does Saint John’s pastoral lenience absolve the Moscow Patriarchate of its continued membership in the World Council of Churches, with all its ecumenical compromises and Protestant ecclesiological statements? Does it excuse their participation in joint prayer with Monophysites, Papists, and other heterodox communions? Does it absolve the suffocating silence of their bishops, who dare not question their Sergianist masters in Moscow? Does it excuse the Moscow Patriarchate’s de-canonization of a number of New Martyrs, or its continual exaltation of Patriarch Sergius—the betrayer of the Russian Church—whom they are now on the verge of canonizing? The answer is manifest: No. Of course not.

Whiteford must appeal to Saint John, who reposed in the Lord long before the Moscow Patriarchate had significantly intensified its heretical activities. For after the repose of Saint John of San Francisco, the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia—particularly from 1965 to 2001—took on an increasingly stringent and resolutely anti-Moscow Patriarchate character, most notably under the leadership of Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov).

In my recent publication, *In Their Own Words: The Private Letters of Saint Philaret of New York & Bishop Gregory Grabbe*, I demonstrate precisely this development. Saint Philaret of New York himself writes with clarity concerning the pastoral leniency of Saint John, as well as his broader awareness of the situation with the Moscow Patriarchate and the other Russian schisms to which Whiteford alludes in his article. In his private letter to Abbess Magdalena, written in 1979, he states:

We have already seen that schism is as terrible an evil as heresy, not by today’s weak minded reasoning, but by the teaching of the Holy Fathers and, clearly, its end will be the same. I do not dare to pass judgement on our contemporary, the founder of the schism, Metropolitan Eulogius, but I fear for his soul, and I fear for all those who have been led astray by him and his successors into schism. And I do not understand the position of the late Vladyka John—a true servant of God and a man of God—in this matter. Why did he not immediately “dot all the I’s” and explain to the Eulogians the falsehood of their path and position?! After all, it was precisely because it was not immediately and clearly stated where is the truth and where the falsehood (there cannot be two truths), where is the white and where is the black, where is the light and where the darkness, which path is right and which is wrong—that there was this “inter-jurisdictional confusion”—and the satiation would be clear.” The fact that many “Orthodox” go indiscriminately to any church, what does this indicate? Simply that the people do not value the truth [2].

This primary source document, taken from the private letters of Saint Philaret, provides valuable insight into how Saint John related not only to the Moscow Patriarchate, but also to the Metropolia and the Parisian schismatics. His stance was indeed not as strict as some might prefer; nevertheless, this was the pastoral approach he adopted.

Yet, in another primary source document—a private letter of Saint Philaret to Prince S. S. Beloselsky, written in 1963, while Saint John was still alive—we encounter a much sterner assessment. There, Saint Philaret reflects on the propaganda disseminated by the Soviets in order to obscure the truth, deceive the faithful, and convince them that those under Soviet control were, in fact, truly Orthodox. Saint Philaret writes:

What was the reason for such a step? “Political instability”? God forbid! Vladyka Meletius was not a reed shaken by the wind! But the propaganda and agitation were so strong, the “fog” cast by those working on Moscow’s behalf was so dense, that for a time, anyone could lose sight of the proper perspective—just as the most experienced navigator can lose his way in an impenetrable fog. Do not forget: the Eastern patriarchs themselves traveled to Moscow and served with Patriarch Alexei! That was what Moscow achieved at that time! And this was the main factor that led the simple-hearted and trusting Vladyka Meletius to believe that things had truly changed for the better in the USSR and to recognize Moscow’s jurisdiction.

Vladyka John found himself in a similar situation. For a time, he had no means of knowing the true state of affairs, especially given that erroneous reports circulated in the Far East claiming that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia no longer existed. But as soon as the truth became clear, he turned away from Moscow in a most decisive manner [3].

This decisive turning away from the Moscow Patriarchate by Saint John of Shanghai at that time can be corroborated by yet another primary source historical document, uncovered in the archives of the Central Intelligence Agency. In this 1947 report, entitled *Political Information: Activities of Archbishop Viktor*, it is recorded in detail that Saint John refused to accept the Moscow Patriarchate. This secular primary source document reads:

[Redacted] Note: See [Redacted] which refers to the jurisdictional dispute between Archbishops Viktor and John mentioned below. Archbishop Viktor, who is the Moscow-sponsored head of the Russian Orthodox Church in China, was elevated to the position of senior Archbishop in China, with the Archdiocese at Peiping, in 1933 by the Russian Orthodox Synod, which was at that time in exile in Yugoslavia. He collaborated conspicuously with the Japanese, and was decorated by the Japanese government. Archbishop John /Iona or Ioann/ is a Russian Archbishop in Shanghai who has refused to accept the Moscow Patriarch, and who recognizes only the authority of the primate of the Orthodox Church in the United States [ROCOR]. See also [Redacted] which reported Archbishop Viktor had received a permit to enter the USSR [4].

What is valuable about these recently published works of *Orthodox Traditionalist Publications* is that the faithful no longer need to rely upon a false-teaching priest, offering historically dubious claims on behalf of ROCOR-MP, to tell them what the true history of ROCOR is. Now, one may go directly to the primary source documents themselves—documents which, for professional historians, are worth their weight in gold.

Nevertheless, Whiteford persists in his attempts to argue that because Saint John briefly recognized the Moscow Patriarchate, this somehow establishes a precedent obligating others to remain in communion with them, despite their present-day heretical positions. Whiteford even writes in his article: “Obviously, had [Saint John] believed the Moscow Patriarchate was a graceless Church, he would never have done this” [5].

He seems to imagine this as a “gotcha moment” in the life of Saint John. Yet he fails to consider the far more significant fact that once Saint John learned that the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad was still in existence, he immediately broke communion with the Moscow Patriarchate and resumed the commemoration of the First Hierarch of the Church Abroad, Metropolitan Anastasi.



Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (1946)

As I have already acknowledged, there is no dispute that Saint John was markedly more lenient toward the Moscow Patriarchate, the Metropolia, and the Parisian schismatics than were most of his contemporaries—particularly during the Second World War and the chaotic post-war years. Yet Whiteford deliberately omits the fact of ROCOR's official stance in this period, namely the 1943 Synodal Condemnation of Patriarch Sergius. In this decree, issued on October 16, 1943, the Synod of Bishops declared the following:

№ 6

**Definition of the Meeting of Russian Bishops in Vienna regarding the election of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia
Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky)**

October 16, 1943

The meeting of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, having discussed the case of the election of the former Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal See, Metropolitan Sergius, to the Patriarchal See determines:

1. The election of Metropolitan Sergius to the See of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia is an act not only uncanonical, but also non-ecclesiastical, but political, caused by the interests of the Soviet communist government and its leader, dictator Stalin, who are experiencing a severe crisis during the war and need the help of the Orthodox Church hated by them and until recently clearly persecuted by them.

The Soviet Communist Party and Stalin in their attitude to religion and the Church of Christ, in essence, have not changed at all. Religion is still for them the “opium of the people,” and when the need for the help of the Church has passed, they will not fail to resume the open persecution of believers and priests in Russia. In his statement on the radio, Stalin, in order to strengthen his tyrannical power, only wants to show the world that the Soviet Communist Party and he, as its leader, give freedom to the Church, going supposedly sincerely towards the suffering Russian people in their aspiration to God. He stretches out his hands to his captives to the hierarchs of the Russian Church, who, under his pressure, recognized the God-fighting power as legitimate and popular, offers them imaginary peace and a sly kiss, promotes the installation of the Patriarch. But it is impossible to believe him – he has not repented and, together with his communist party, still remains eager for a world communist revolution with the destruction of Christianity and all religion. He only temporarily put on the mask of an ally of the Church.

The election of the Patriarch and the convocation of the Council are needed by Stalin and his party as a means for political propaganda. The patriarch in his hands is just a toy, a utility tool in his clever combinations. He will do with him what he wants. Until there was a war, it was impossible in Russia to elect a Patriarch and organize a Synod. But when a deadly danger loomed over the Communists, then there was a full opportunity to do it in the most simplified way. The canonical, full Council of the Russian Church, provided for by the resolution of the All-Russian Council of 1917-18 (Article 1), was not convened, at least only with bishops. The confessing bishops, suffering for the faith in exile and prisons, were not invited. The martyr Church hiding in the “catacombs” of Soviet Russia was not represented. Only a tiny number of bishops were gathered, who submitted to the God-fighting government and could not be the representatives of the will of the entire Russian Church. The Patriarch is a hierarch who had long bowed before the satanic authority, who declared in 1927 on behalf of the Church that it rejoiced at the successes of this power and that there was no persecution of the Church in Soviet Russia (statement to foreign correspondents in 1930), although now Stalin himself admitted that the Soviet government had so far deprived the Russian people of the Church and freedom of religion. And the first act of the new supreme church authority was blasphemously political resolutions on the establishment of a special prayer for the opening of the so-called “second front” and on the anathematization of Russian people fighting against the Communists and the Bolshevik government.

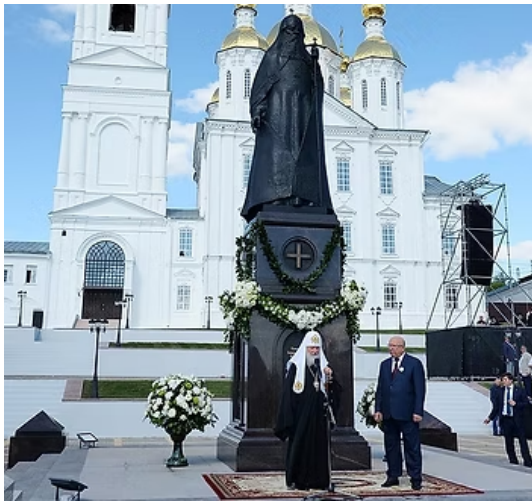
The pressure of this satanic power on the hierarchy submissive to it is beyond any doubt. The uncanonical and non-ecclesiastical election of the Patriarch, carried out in the interests of the God-fighting government, is no less dangerous for the Church than open persecution against it. It is fraught with serious consequences. It humiliates the authority of the Church and its hierarchs, it puts them in a service position before the servants of the devil, inflicts new wounds on the martyred Church in the person of its still persecuted confessors and creates a new turmoil in the church environment. New temptations are being born for believers and new reasons for mockery of them by non-believers. By the fact that Metropolitan Sergius sacrificed the Orthodox Church to the interests of the godless Soviet power and placed it in the service of this power, he committed a betrayal of the Church of Christ.

2. In view of the above considerations, the Meeting of Bishops of the foreign part of the Russian Church, which is always faithful to its Mother Church and never breaks off spiritual communion with her, in the duty of episcopal conscience does not find it possible to recognize Metropolitan Sergius as the canonical, legitimate Patriarch of the All-Russian Church and offer prayers for him as its head.
3. The administration of the foreign part of the Russian Church should therefore remain unchanged, according to the resolutions of the Council of Bishops of 1927, based on the Decree of His Holiness the Patriarch and St. [sic] Synod of November 7/20, 1920, until the establishment of normal relations with Russia and the establishment of true freedom of faith in it.
4. To explain to the pastors of the Church and all believers that all the prohibitions and church punishments emanating from the current Moscow church authorities are illegal, invalid and should not in the least embarrass the conscience of God-abiding Russian people.
5. To address the Orthodox children of the Russian Church in the Homeland and in the scattering with a special appeal regarding the election of the Patriarch in the Soviet Union, in which to find out the true, canonical view of the election of the Patriarchs of the Local Churches and the anti-clerical act committed in Moscow on August 30/September 12 this year under the pressure of the satanic authorities.
6. To bring this resolution to the attention of the First Hierarchs of all autocephalous Orthodox Churches [6].

Whiteford, in his continued defense of the Moscow Patriarchate, tacitly rejects the Russian Catacomb Church and its position on the Moscow Patriarchate, since the Catacomb Church maintained that the Patriarchate was a Soviet-created structure lacking apostolic succession. Whiteford argues that neither the Russian Catacomb Church nor the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad were walking the royal path, or the “middle road.” Rather, only those who rejected the Soviet Church’s policies without entirely condemning it, he claims, were truly on the “middle road.” In Whiteford’s own words:

The problems the Russian Church faced were in many ways unprecedented, and not everyone in the Russian Church agreed on how to respond. And divisions were intentionally stoked by the Soviets who wanted to divide the Russian Church, so it could more easily destroy it. In Russia itself, you had the official Church under the Moscow Patriarchate, the Catacomb Church, which largely considered the MP to be traitors, and thus without grace, and then you had those who took a middle road -- not accepting the policies of the MP, but also not condemning it entirely [7].

Here again, Whiteford seems to forget that the Russian Church Abroad also entirely rejected all of the “Patriarchal elections” of the Moscow Patriarchate from Sergius onward. He also seems to have entirely overlooked the official position of the Russian Church Abroad and the Synod’s canon lawyer, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), who published in 1971, and was distributed by the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, *The Canonical and Legal Position of the Moscow Patriarchate*, in which Bishop Gregory states in the last line of his book: “legally and canonically the Moscow Patriarchate and its synod are nothing but a fiction and a vast bluff” [8]. Additionally, in 1971, the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad decreed: “All the elections of Patriarchs in Moscow, beginning in 1943, are invalid on the basis of the 30th Canon of the Holy Apostles and the 3rd Canon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, according to which ‘if any bishop, having made use of secular rulers, should receive through them episcopal authority in the Church, let him be deposed and excommunicated together with all those in communion with him’” [9].



Patriarch Kirill of Moscow Dedicating a Statue of
Patriarch Sergius (2017)

The debate concerning the presence or absence of grace within the Moscow Patriarchate is, in reality, a secondary matter. Within both the Russian Church Abroad and the Russian Catacomb Church, opinions on this particular question indeed varied. Yet what did not vary—and what remained unwaveringly consistent—was the conviction that communion with the Soviet-created Moscow Patriarchate was altogether impossible. Both the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Russian Catacomb Church ceased communion with that state-controlled structure. For instance, Saint Seraphim (Samoilovich of Uglich) wrote concerning “Patriarch” Sergius and the Moscow Patriarchate: “Metropolitan Sergius has fallen away from the Church, that is, by his actions he has transgressed the Church canons. Metropolitan Sergius no longer remains in the bosom of the Orthodox Church. The church which has recognized righteousness in communism is not a church. An organization (MP) bought at the price of bowing down to the Antichrist is unworthy of the Church.” [10]

Likewise, Saint Cyril of Kazan is well known for his teaching later in life that the Moscow Patriarchate is indeed graceless (See: *The New Martyrs of Russia*), a conviction and teaching that has even been enshrined in the infallible liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church. Thus, in *Ode VII of the Canon of Saint Cyril of Kazan* in the service for the commemoration of the *Holy New Hieromartyrs of Cyril of Kazan & Joseph of Petrograd (November 7th)*, the Church prays: “Thou wast merciful, saying prudently: Even if the Holy Mysteries are performed by Sergius and his henchmen, yet these are only efficacious for those who are ignorant of their unrighteousness; but for those who perform these Mysteries, and do so knowingly, and are aware that they are mocking the Holy Church, for such all these things are unto their judgment and condemnation” [11].

This liturgical text poses a problem for Whiteford, since the Canon to Saint Cyril remains a prayer of the Church to this very day. As he would know, we pray what we believe, and we believe what we pray. Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev of the Moscow Patriarchate, in his work *Orthodox Christianity, Volume II: Doctrine and Teaching of the Orthodox Church*, stresses that even the liturgical texts of the Church are infallible in matters of dogmatic theology. Concerning the multiple sources of dogmatic infallibility, he writes that:

The liturgical Tradition of the Church is certainly used as an absolute authority. In their dogmatic irreproachability, the texts of the divine services of the Orthodox Church serve as do Holy Scripture and the faithful decrees of the councils. These texts are not only works issued by theologians and poets, but are a part of the liturgical experience of many generations of Christians. In the Orthodox Church, the authority of the texts of the divine services is founded on reception, the process these texts underwent over many centuries, when they were read and sung everywhere in every Orthodox temple. [...] These texts became pure and irreproachable theology, covered in the poetic forms of church hymns. That is why the Church acknowledged these texts of the divine services among the ranks of the “Rules of Faith,” in the ranks of the infallible dogmatic sources [12].

Moreover, Saint Joseph of Petrograd, the leader of Russia’s Catacomb Church, spoke in complete agreement with the other confessors, declaring: “It is not we who go into schism by not submitting to Metropolitan Sergius, but rather you who are obedient to him go with him into the abyss of the Church’s condemnation.” [13]

Now ask yourself: has the Moscow Patriarchate ever renounced this pseudo-patriarch, the betrayer of Christ? Of course not. As I have already mentioned, the MP is now on the verge of canonizing Sergius, erecting statues and even fashioning icons of him, while simultaneously de-canonizing various Russian New Martyrs. They continue to refuse acknowledgment, even to this very day, of the 1981 canonization of Saint Joseph of Petrograd by Saint Philaret of New York, despite the universal canonization of the New Martyrs themselves.

And this is precisely whom Whiteford and his associates strive to defend—this apostate structure. They tirelessly make excuses for and defend the indefensible. If all the saints cited above severed communion with the Moscow Patriarchate in their own time, and if that same Moscow Patriarchate persists today in its pro-Sergianist and ecumenist trajectory, why should anyone believe the false-teaching pseudo-priests who desperately labor to keep you within the bosom of the Soviet-created MP?

Their excuse is predictable: they claim that communism fell, that the Church is now free, and that the circumstances are no longer what they once were. But if that were true, why has the Moscow Patriarchate never once publicly repented of its actions?

Whiteford's entire thesis rests on a shallow premise: that Saint John of Shanghai did not, in his lifetime, explicitly call the Moscow Patriarchate "graceless," did not employ the term "Sergianist," and was in general more pastoral and lenient toward those within the MP, the Metropolia, and the Parisians. From this, Whiteford concludes that one must therefore remain obedient to his FSB-controlled bishops in Moscow—or else be branded a "Donatist" and a "schismatic."

But what this truly reveals is Whiteford's contempt for his readers. He believes you are too stupid to recognize the historical circumstances under which Saint John (1896–1966) exercised his pastoral discretion, as compared to the situation after 1966, when the Moscow Patriarchate dramatically escalated its ecumenical activity.

At the close of his article, in a characteristically Soviet fashion, Whiteford charges those who separate from his FSB bishops with "Donatism." Clearly, however, Whiteford does not even understand the heresy he invokes. Donatism, a fourth-century schismatic movement in North Africa, taught that the Church must be composed of morally pure clergy for the Mysteries to retain their validity. By deploying this accusation in such a manner, Whiteford essentially collapses the distinction between sin and heresy, implying that one may openly preach heresy and yet it would remain only a "personal sin." But if his reasoning were correct, then Arius' public blasphemies were merely private faults, and no one ought to have separated from him—or from Nestorius, or Apollinarius, or any other heresiarch. Clearly, such logic collapses under its own absurdity.

Recently, the New Calendarist priest, Father Peter Heers of *Orthodox Ethos*, offered a brief definition of Donatism. In his video, he states:

Donatism is very specific. Its doubting the mysteries because of the priest's immorality or anti-canonical activity, or whatever it is. It's not a question of the church's presence. The Church presence. The Church is not doubted in Donatism. It's the Church and they're doubting the existence of grace because of a priest's apostasy or a priest's, whatever, a personal [sin], on a personal level. That's Donatism in a nutshell [14].

This Donatist accusation of Whiteford is, in truth, quite foolish. No one within the Old Calendarist movement claims that the Moscow Patriarchate is graceless merely because Patriarch Kirill became a millionaire through the sale of tobacco and alcohol—thus earning the notorious nickname the "Tobacco Metropolitan" [15]—or because he was photographed wearing a \$30,000 Réveil du Tsar model Breguet watch, only to have it deceitfully airbrushed out of the official photo, with the editor forgetting to erase its reflection from the table [16].

No, that is not the reason why the faithful of Old ROCOR, the Catacomb Church, and the Old Calendarist Church believe the Moscow Patriarchate to be graceless. The reason is this: since the time of Sergius, the Moscow Patriarchate has submitted itself to godless Soviet persecutors, denied the reality of that persecution, and, in more recent decades, has embraced the pan-heresy of ecumenism. It has entered membership in the World Council of Churches, subscribed to the WCC's ecclesiological statement upon admission, participated in common prayer with Monophysites, recognized Papist "mysteries," and even affirmed the "mysteries" of the ecumenically condemned Monophysites—all of this not through the errant words of an isolated hierarchy, but through synodal decisions, approved and upheld at the patriarchal level.

Here lies the essential distinction between the Donatists and the Orthodox who are rightly separated from a heretical patriarchate. It is not scandals of personal corruption—the \$30,000 watch, the profiteering of Kirill—that render them graceless. Rather, it is the synodal decrees of the Patriarchate itself. For instance, during their Jubilee Council in Moscow, they officially proclaimed: "Communities which have fallen away from Orthodoxy have never been viewed as fully deprived of the grace of God. Any break from communion with the Church inevitably leads to an erosion of her grace-filled life, but not always to its complete loss in these separated communities" [17].

Similarly, the Head of the Department of External Church Relations, speaking in his official capacity on behalf of the Moscow Patriarchate, declared: “If a Roman Catholic priest converts to Orthodoxy, we receive him as a priest, and we do not re-ordain him. And that means that, de facto, we recognize the Mysteries of the Roman Catholic Church.” [18] And as a last example their 1969 patriarchal synodal decision which opened communion to Latin Papists [19], a decision that has since then never been repented of or rescinded and which is referenced to in the Second Sorrowful Epistle of Saint Philaret of New York [20].

Saint John, during his life, was not a polemicist. As noted previously, he was profoundly pastoral in his speech and conduct toward various schismatics, and he did not employ the sharply defined terminology that many other hierarchs and clergy of ROCOR favored. Nevertheless, he did write about them in his own manner, acknowledging and instructing that they, too, bore their own spiritual failings. One of the rare instances where this is evident is in an article published in *The Orthodox Word* in 1972, entitled *The Decline of the Patriarchate of Constantinople*. [21]

About the WCC. See 6:24 Concerning the 4th WCC Assembly in Uppsala 1968

However, none of this should be construed as any sort of vindication of the Patriarchate of Moscow, or of how heretical it has become since the repose of Saint John. In 1968, at the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, the Moscow Patriarchate was a prominently present jurisdiction, committed to signing statements so openly heretical that they shocked the Russian Church Abroad. The Church’s response to this grave affront was expressed clearly in the First Sorrowful Epistle of Saint Philaret:

Since the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi, the Orthodox delegates no longer make separate statements, but have merged into one mass with the Protestant confessions. Thus all the decisions of the Uppsala Assembly are made in the name of “the Church,” which is always spoken of in the singular. Who is speaking? Who gave these people the right to make ecclesiological statements not merely on their own behalf, but also on behalf of the Orthodox Church? We ask you, Most Reverend Brothers, to check the list of the Churches participating in the Ecumenical Movement and in the World Council of Churches. Take, for instance, at least the first lines of the list on page 444 of *The Uppsala 68 Report*.

There you will find the following names: Evangelical Church of the River Plata, Methodist Church of Australia, Churches of Christ in Australia, The Church of England of Australia, Congregational Union of Australia, Presbyterian Church of Australia. Is it necessary to continue the list? Is it not clear that beginning with the very first lines, confessions are included which differ greatly from Orthodoxy, which deny sacraments, hierarchy, Church traditions, holy canons, which do not venerate the Mother of God and the Saints, etc.? We should have to enumerate nearly all of our dogmas in order to point out what in our Orthodox doctrines is not accepted by the majority of the members of the World Council of Churches — of which, however, the Orthodox Church is now nevertheless alleged to be an organic member.

Yet in the name of the various representatives of all possible heresies, the Uppsala Assembly constantly states, “the Church professes,” “the Church teaches,” “the Church does this and that,” out of this mixture of errors, which have gone so far astray from Tradition, the published decision on “the Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church” makes the statement “the Holy Spirit has not only preserved the Church in continuity with the past; He is all continuously present in the Church, effecting her inward renewal and re-creation.” The question is, where is the “continuity with the past” among those who do not recognise any mysteries? How can one speak of the catholicity of those who do not accept the decisions of the Œcumenical Councils? [22].

The statement of a Russian Orthodox Moscow Patriarchate delegate participating in a session entitled The Finality of Jesus Christ, is recorded in the Official Uppsala Report:

In the brief period available for discussion of the three addresses, Bishop Mikhail, Delegate (Russian Orthodox Church) warned against the tendency for the ecumenical movement to become a matter of words more than deeds. In Jesus Christ word and action were inseparable. Mankind was awaiting answers from the Church on many questions - hunger, war, disunity - and we must make a serious attempt to find solutions to these problems. “The Church used to excommunicate people because of their beliefs, but it should now excommunicate people who refuse to take decisions concerning the problems of the world today” [23].

Has the Moscow Patriarchate ever rescinded or repented of these heretical statements, or revoked its membership in the World Council of Churches since its original admission in 1961? No—it has not. To this day, it remains one of the largest and most active members of this heretical Protestant organization. Of course, Whiteford and his cohort of Moscow Patriarchate apologists will dismiss much of this on the grounds that it occurred over fifty years ago, claiming that the Moscow Patriarchate no longer engages in such practices.

This, however, is an outright falsehood. As recently as September 2025, the Moscow Patriarchate has been moving full steam ahead with its ecumenical agenda, with Patriarch Kirill personally participating in these events, under the full endorsement and authority of the Patriarchal Synod. This point is crucial, for Whiteford and his historical renovationists often attempt to reduce these actions to the level of mere personal sin, insisting they do not constitute public heresy. Such arguments are untenable in light of the Patriarchate’s continued, official, and highly visible participation in heretical ecumenical structures.

On September 17, 2025, at the *VIII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions* held in Astana, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’ publicly advocated for the creation of a Consultative Council of Religions at the United Nations. According to reports by Sputnik Kazakhstan, the Patriarch argued that such a council could serve as a platform for interfaith dialogue and strengthen the peacekeeping potential of the UN. He stated:

Our joint voice, considering our belonging to different nations and religions, could become a voice of conscience and reconciliation [24].

In his address, Patriarch Kirill highlighted the shared moral and cultural heritage of believers across the globe, asserting that this common foundation fosters mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, particularly in Russia and Kazakhstan. He also emphasized the growing religiosity among youth in the post-Soviet space and encouraged interfaith initiatives to guide young believers away from radicalism and toward dialogue and cooperation.

September 17, 2025 The VIII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions

At first glance, such statements may appear pastoral or conciliatory. Yet, when viewed in the historical and theological context of the Moscow Patriarchate's actions, they reveal a continuation of its official participation in heretical ecumenism—an ongoing engagement in structures that promote religious syncretism and the equalization of truth claims across religions. The proposal of a Consultative Council of Religions at the United Nations, under the banner of dialogue and cooperation, aligns with a long-standing MP pattern of endorsing interfaith forums and assemblies in which the Orthodox Faith is placed on the same level as non-Orthodox religions, thereby undermining the exclusive truth of Christ and the Orthodox Church.

This event in Astana is emblematic of the Moscow Patriarchate's contemporary ecumenical orientation, echoing historical precedents such as its entry into the World Council of Churches in 1961 and its participation in subsequent assemblies, including Uppsala (1968), where the MP supported statements that were deeply objectionable to the Russian Church Abroad. By promoting interfaith councils at a global level, Patriarch Kirill is effectively advancing the same spirit of heretical ecumenism that has characterized Moscow's relations with non-Orthodox confessions for decades—subordinating doctrinal integrity to a politically palatable vision of universal religious cooperation.

In short, the Astana Congress and the proposed UN Consultative Council represent not merely a diplomatic or humanitarian initiative but a clear continuation of the Moscow Patriarchate's official engagement in syncretistic, heretical ecumenical structures, which remain a source of grave concern for Orthodox believers committed to the preservation of the true Faith.

All of this, however, poses no problem for John Whiteford, as he simply ignores the issue of the World Council of Churches and sidesteps it, just as he and the host did in the recent podcast debate between Father Joseph Suaiden and himself on the *Orthodox Christian Theology* YouTube channel, saying:

Well, the World Council of Churches obviously was involved, and the Orthodox participants in the World Council of Churches were involved in some messy stuff. I think one favor that one Greek Old Calendar group did back in the '90s was that the Cyprianos Synod produced a series of videos where they exposed that this stuff was happening. They translated these videos into—well, they translated them into English because it was originally in Greek, and they translated into Russian; it might have been in some other languages too. But I know that it had a very big impact because it showed people what was going on, and that, I think, led to Georgia and Bulgaria withdrawing from the World Council of Churches.

Now, the Moscow Patriarchate suspended its participation in the World Council of Churches, but basically they leveraged their weight with the World Council of Churches to say, “Okay, we are going to leave the World Council of Churches unless you make changes to your Constitution.” So, basically, the World Council of Churches had to no longer allow statements to be issued unless every church that was a member agreed to it, and they could no longer allow inter-faith or inter-denominational worship.

Since then, you haven’t seen videos like that being produced, because the World Council of Churches basically agreed to those terms. The Moscow Patriarchate probably would withdraw from the World Council of Churches altogether, except for the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarch continues to be a member. The last thing they want to do is leave the stage of the World Council of Churches to the Ecumenical Patriarch, giving him all the power so that he could say whatever he thinks Orthodoxy is, and have all these other people just assume that he is the spokesman for Orthodoxy [25].

The problem with Whiteford’s statement is that none of what he claims is actually true. He relies solely on memory, offers no substantive research, and assumes that his audience will accept his words merely because he is a priest of ROCOR-MP. In reality, what he asserts is entirely incorrect. Joint theological statements continue to be issued, inter-confessional worship services occur regularly, and joint prayer meetings take place—not only among the Moscow Patriarchate but across virtually all jurisdictions of World Orthodoxy, with only two exceptions. All of these developments are documented in my in-depth research article from February 2024, *The Ecclesiology of the WCC: Your Jurisdiction’s Membership in Demonic Heresy*.

Whiteford’s attempt to argue that Saint John of Shanghai’s pastoral, non-polemical approach justifies viewing the Moscow Patriarchate as canonical and free from heresy is not only amateur historiography, it is utterly misleading. Using Saint John as a “proof-text” to excuse the MP’s actions is both historically inaccurate and intellectually dishonest.

From 1966 to 2025, the Moscow Patriarchate has been consistently involved in the pan-heresy of ecumenism, participating continuously at high-level World Council of Churches events. It has also promoted the legacy of the Soviet Union and its former leaders, a fact so glaring that even Whiteford’s own synod felt compelled to issue a mild, almost timid warning [26] .

Whiteford’s argument regarding Saint John’s attitude toward the Soviet structures collapses entirely when confronted with the Moscow Patriarchate’s ongoing, unabashed participation in heretical ecumenism—a participation openly documented daily on the MP’s Official Department of External Church Relations (DECR) website.

To conclude this analysis, let us revisit the following questions. Consider them carefully, reflect on the answers, and arrive at your own determination regarding these important issues. The questions you should seriously consider are:

- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate renounced and repented of Sergianism?
- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate renounced and repented of Ecumenism?
- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate anathematized Ecumenism?
- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate left the World Council of Churches?
- ☐ Does the Moscow Patriarchate continue to publicly participate in WCC events?
- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate recently participated in a joint prayer with Pope Leo in the Vatican in September 2025? (Yes)
- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate accepted Saint Joseph of Petrograd as a saint?
- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate reversed its removal of New Martyrs as saints, such as Saint Basil of Kineshma?
- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate removed all icons, statues, and other depictions of Soviet leaders from its churches?
- ☐ Has the Moscow Patriarchate condemned Patriarch Sergius as a betrayer of the Russian Church and ceased veneration of him as a saint?

Whiteford's revisionism relies on selective memory, rhetorical sleight of hand, and the manipulation of Saint John's pastoral lenience to justify continued submission to the Moscow Patriarchate. But history is not written by proof-texts—it is established through the careful study of primary sources, official decrees, and the consistent testimony of the saints and confessors of the Church. On this ground, Whiteford stands exposed as an apologist, not a historian. The historical record is clear: the Russian Church Abroad, the Catacomb Church, and the very hierarchs Whiteford dares to invoke all rejected communion with the Soviet-created Patriarchate and condemned its betrayal of Christ. Whiteford may attempt to repackage apostasy as fidelity, but the witness of the saints and the archival record cannot be silenced. In the end, the choice before the faithful is stark: either follow the revisionist path of false shepherds who defend an apostate hierarchy, or stand with the true confessors of Orthodoxy who, at great cost, preserved the Church's integrity against Sergianism and Ecumenism. History, not propaganda, bears witness to where the truth lies.

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